

**EQUALALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 31, 2021

5:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Mia Costello, Chair  
Senator Roger Holland, Vice Chair  
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson (via teleconference)

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Joshua Revak  
Senator Gary Stevens

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Alaska Workers' Compensation Board  
Lake Williams - Fairbanks  
Robert Weel - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

Board of Veterinary Examiners  
Scott Flamme - Fairbanks  
Hal Geiger - Juneau

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Board  
Nathan Missler - Anchorage  
Lisa Radley - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

Board of Nursing  
Wendy Monrad - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Board of Professional Counselors  
Eleanor Vinson - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Marijuana Control Board  
Bruce Schulte - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Real Estate Commission  
Elizabeth Schok - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

#### **PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

#### **WITNESS REGISTER**

HAL GEIGER, Appointee  
Board of Veterinary Examiners  
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Veterinary Examiners.

LAKE WILLIAMS, Appointee  
Alaska Workers' Compensation Board  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD)  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Alaska Workers' Compensation Board.

ROBERT WEEL, Appointee  
Alaska Workers' Compensation Board  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Alaska Workers' Compensation Board.

ELEANOR VINSON, Appointee  
Board of Professional Counselors  
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Professional Counselors.

NATHAN MISSLER, Appointee

Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Board  
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Board.

WENDY MONRAD, Appointee  
Board of Nursing  
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Nursing.

SCOTT FLAMME, Appointee  
Board of Veterinary Examiners  
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Veterinary Examiners.

BRUCE SCHULTE, Appointee  
Marijuana Control Board  
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Marijuana Control Board.

LACY WILCOX, President  
Board of Directors  
Alaska Marijuana Industry Association  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Bruce Schulte, appointee to the Marijuana Control Board.

ELIZABETH SCHOK, Appointee  
Real Estate Commission  
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Real Estate Commission.

LISA RADLEY, Appointee  
Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Board  
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Board.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[5:30:24 PM](#)

**CHAIR MIA COSTELLO** called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Holland, Gray-Jackson (via teleconference) and Chair Costello.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)**  
**Alaska Workers' Compensation Board**  
**Board of Veterinary Examiners**  
**Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Board**  
**Board of Nursing**  
**Board of Pharmacy**  
**Board of Professional Counselors**  
**Marijuana Control Board**  
**Real Estate Commission**

[5:31:05 PM](#)

**CHAIR COSTELLO** announced the consideration of the Governor's Appointees to boards and commissions.

[5:31:51 PM](#)

**HAL GEIGER**, Appointee, Board of Veterinary Examiners, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Juneau, Alaska, stated that he retired from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) where he worked in various positions, including as chief biometrician. During his time at ADF&G, he became familiar with the Board of Fisheries' process. He said he feels the Board of Veterinary Examiners is a good fit for his skill set and interests. His technical background was helpful during his first term serving on the board, he said. He would like to continue to serve on the board.

[5:33:24 PM](#)

**CHAIR COSTELLO** opened public testimony on the confirmation of Hal Geiger; finding none, she closed public testimony.

She asked him to talk about the board's main challenges in the coming year.

**MR. GEIGER** answered that the Board of Veterinary Examiners has experienced significant difficulty with the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). The board has spent considerable time

evaluating ways to make it workable and for ways to handle disciplinary actions.

CHAIR COSTELLO related her understanding that a bill currently before the legislature would exempt veterinarians from PDMP requirements.

[5:34:47 PM](#)

LAKE WILLIAMS, Appointee, Alaska Workers' Compensation Board (AWCB), Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), Fairbanks, Alaska, stated he is reapplying to serve on the Alaska Workers' Compensation Board (AWCB). He related he was originally appointed in 2014 by Governor Parnell, was reappointed by Governor Walker and is applying for his third term. He is a lifelong Alaskan and apprenticed with the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 302 [Local 302] after high school, he said. After graduating from the University of Iowa, he returned to work for Local 302, working his way through the ranks to become the district representative. He would like to use his skills to improve the work environment for workers and employers in Alaska. His overarching goal is to improve the Workers' Compensation System.

[5:37:29 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony and after first determining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearing for Lake Williams.

[5:37:51 PM](#)

ROBERT WEEL, Appointee, Alaska Workers' Compensation Board, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), Anchorage, Alaska, said Governor Frank Murkowski initially appointed him to serve on the Alaska Workers' Compensation Board (AWCB). He has enjoyed serving on the board the past 15 years, he said. He related his goal is to assist employers and injured workers. He would like to continue to serve another three years on the board.

[5:39:35 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony on the confirmation of Robert Weel; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[5:40:06 PM](#)

ELEANOR VINSON, Appointee, Board of Professional Counselors, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Juneau, Alaska, stated that she was seeking reappointment to the Board of Professional Counselors. She retired from DCCED's

Division of Occupational Licensing several years ago and would like to use the knowledge she gained working for various occupational licensing boards to continue to assist the Board of Professional Counselors.

[5:41:39 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony the confirmation of Eleanor Vinson; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[5:42:09 PM](#)

NATHAN MISSLER, Appointee, Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Board, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Anchorage, Alaska, said he has worked as an occupational therapist for five years. He would like to serve on the board to assist the physical therapy and occupational therapy community keep current on issues such as telehealth and continuing education.

[5:43:08 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony on the confirmation of Nathan Missler; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[5:43:28 PM](#)

WENDY MONRAD, Appointee, Board of Nursing, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Anchorage, Alaska, said she has worked as a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) for 30 years. She has worked at the Alaska Native Medical Center for 15 years. She has served on the board since March 2019, including during the early COVID-19 pandemic. Because of COVID-19, the board held extra board meetings to strategize how to keep Alaskans safe. The board has streamlined and refined its regulations to better assist nurses. She would like to continue to serve for a second term on the board.

[5:45:46 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO related her understanding that nurse license renewals were waived during COVID-19 and now all nursing licenses need to be renewed. She asked her how the board is managing this.

MS. MONRAD responded that the Board of Nursing staff has done an excellent job working with nurses, including obtaining verification of continuing education for license renewals. She explained that the board has made significant changes to streamline its on-line renewal process. The board still struggles to provide license renewals for advanced practice licensees and PDMP, but she believes the overall renewal process

is going well. She noted it can be challenging for staff to work remotely.

CHAIR COSTELLO advised that the committee passed out a bill earlier today to address temporary licensure.

[5:48:13 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON thanked her for her willingness to serve. She asked if she was confirmed in 2019 to serve on the Board of Nursing.

MS. MONRAD answered yes. She stated that she finished the last year of her predecessor's term.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked for the Board of Nursing's mission.

MS. MONRAD answered that the Board of Nursing protects Alaskans by providing safe and effective standards of nursing care.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked for the biggest challenges the board faces.

MS. MONRAD answered that telehealth and ongoing regulations are challenging issues for the board. The sunset audit identified regulations for telehealth as an area to address. She noted that a bill is before the legislature to further address telehealth. She related that the Board of Nursing has adopted regulations for telehealth, but some may need to be revised to address any changes in statute. The Board of Nursing will continue its work on COVID-19 issues, she said.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON thanked her for her service on the board.

[5:50:47 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO remarked that besides the temporary licensure bill, this committee also introduced a telehealth bill. Both bills resulted from the Governor's Disaster Declaration. The legislature has been evaluating how boards have been operating and if the legislature should make its laws more flexible.

[5:51:48 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND said he was unsure if he has ever met anyone who has worked for the U.S. Public Health Services. He thanked her for her service.

[5:52:16 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony on the confirmation of Wendy Monrad; finding none, she closed public testimony.

[5:52:49 PM](#)

SCOTT FLAMME, Appointee, Board of Veterinary Examiners, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Fairbanks, Alaska, said he has served on the board for 18 months. He has operated a veterinary practice for 18 years in Fairbanks. He expressed an interest in better understanding the legislative process and PDMP involvement. He would like to continue to use his veterinary and computer background perspectives on the board. He acknowledged that PDMP has been a challenging and complicated issue for the board.

[5:55:22 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND asked him to identify the acronym PDMP.

CHAIR COSTELLO explained that PDMP refers to the Prescription Drug Management Program passed by the legislature. She explained that veterinarians were included in the program. She asked how onerous the database is and if veterinarians must post daily entries to the database.

MR. FLAMME said that PDMP is onerous. He explained that prescribers must report controlled substances on a daily basis under the pet owner's name since a database for animals receiving the drugs does not exist. This allows the prescribers to query the database for drugs prescribed to owners. If controlled substances are prescribed at a local pharmacy, the veterinarian must query the database, then prescribe medication for three days or less. For example, phenobarbital is a common drug prescribed for animals. Veterinarians must query the owner's name prior to prescribing the drugs.

[5:58:13 PM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO related for understanding that one issue that has arisen is the pet owners' privacy. For example, clinic staff using the database can see the list of prescriptions owners were prescribed.

MR. FLAMME agreed that represents one aspect. He related that minute quantities of controlled substances such as hydrocodone, commonly used to treat dogs with coughs, require a paper script. This requires pet owners to first come to the clinic, then go to the pharmacy to get them filled. This is particularly burdensome for senior pet owners with mobility issues in subzero weather, which could be much worse in villages. PDMP does not make sense,

he said. The majority of Lower-48 states exempt veterinarians from PDMP. In addition, veterinarians were never trained to use the database. Alaska only has about 300 practitioners to spread the costs of an elaborate program. Further, drug enforcement officer investigations have shown that veterinarians are not diverting controlled substances. Instead, the diversion issue stems from drugs brought in from south of the US border. He said he hopes the bill to exempt veterinarians from PDMP will pass.

[6:01:58 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO, after first determining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation hearing for Scott Flamme.

[6:02:42 PM](#)

BRUCE SCHULTE, Appointee, Marijuana Control Board, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Anchorage, Alaska, said this is his second appointment to the board. He was initially appointed to the board at the inception of Alaska's marijuana industry. His early involvement in developing regulations for the industry gives him a unique perspective of the industry. He said he would like to continue to serve on the board.

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony.

[6:04:09 PM](#)

LACY WILCOX, President, Board of Directors, Alaska Marijuana Industry Association (AMIA), Juneau, Alaska, stated that AMIA pleased to support Bruce Schulte to serve in the public/industry seat. She said that he served as one of the founders of AMIA. He provides a common-sense approach to the issues facing marijuana business, she said.

[6:05:46 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO closed public testimony on the confirmation of Bruce Schulte after determining no one else wished to comment.

[6:06:07 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON thanked him for serving. She said she served on the Anchorage Assembly when the marijuana industry was being formed. She said she appreciated the expertise he brings to the board.

[6:06:52 PM](#)

ELIZABETH SCHOK, Appointee, Real Estate Commission, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Anchorage,

Alaska, stated that she has been a real estate licensee for 16 years and now has her associate broker license. She has been involved in the local, state, and national real estate associations, including as an office holder. She related her interest in serving is to bring her experience to the board to help improve business practices, to ensure that consumers understand the real estate industry, so their home-buying experience is better, and to ensure that licensees conduct themselves with integrity. She mentioned changes in the industry and suggested that more education is needed and the consumer disclosure should be updated.

6:09:45 PM

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony on the confirmation of Elizabeth Schok; finding none, she closed public testimony.

6:10:17 PM

SENATOR HOLLAND stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

Alaska Workers' Compensation Board

Lake Williams - Fairbanks

Robert Weel - Anchorage

Board of Veterinary Examiners

Scott Flamme - Fairbanks

Hal Geiger - Juneau

Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Board

Nathan Missler - Anchorage

Board of Nursing

Wendy Monrad - Anchorage

Board of Professional Counselors

Eleanor Vinson - Juneau

Marijuana Control Board

Bruce Schulte - Anchorage

Real Estate Commission

Elizabeth Schok - Anchorage

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or

disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[6:11:13 PM](#)

[The moderator indicated that Lisa Radley, an appointee to the Board of Nursing wished to testify.]

[6:11:16 PM](#)

At ease

[6:11:36 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO reconvened the meeting.

[6:12:11 PM](#)

LISA RADLEY, Appointee, Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Board, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Fairbanks, Alaska, stated she has worked as a physical therapist in Alaska for three years. She said she has served on the board since March 2020. She was appointed to the board in March 2020 and would like to continue to serve to help maintain the integrity of the profession and maximize access to care for patients.

[6:12:45 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO asked what challenges the board faces this year because of COVID-19.

[6:12:56 PM](#)

MS. RADLEY responded that the board is currently working on statutes and regulations related to telemedicine to help clarify those questions.

[6:13:38 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO, after first determining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on Lisa Radley.

[6:13:57 PM](#)

At ease

[6:14:12 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO reconvened the meeting.

[6:14:16 PM](#)

SENATOR HOLLAND stated that in accordance with AS 39.05.080, the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee reviewed the following and recommends the appointment be forwarded to a joint session for consideration:

Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy Board  
Lisa Radley - Anchorage

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[6:14:51 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Costello adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 6:14 p.m.